Charles XIV Jean (alias Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte) and the Finnish Question

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY CYNTHIA J. JOHNSON

RÉSUMÉ L'un des premiers actes importants de Charles XIV Jean à la tête de la Suède fut de renoncer à la reconquête de la Finlande. C'était une position difficile dans les conditions de l'époque et il balança vraisemblablement plusieurs mois avant de prendre une décision définitive, contrairement à ce qu'il put affirmer par la suite. Le régent puis souverain de Suède fut surtout contraint de justifier son choix tout au long de son règne et de naviguer entre les écueils de diverses oppositions plus ou moins structurées. De ce fait, la politique finlandaise fut encore pendant une trentaine d'années une épine dans le pied du pouvoir royal à Stockholm.

ABSTRACT *One of the first important acts of Charles Jean XIV as head of Sweden was to renounce the idea of reconquering Finland. It was a difficult position to take, considering the conditions of the time, and in all likelihood, he swung back and forth for several months before taking a definitive decision, contrary to what he might have asserted later. Moreover, the regent, then sovereign, of Sweden, was forced to justify his choice throughout his reign and to navigate between the dangerous reefs of a diverse opposition, which was organised to varying degrees. Thus, the Finnish policy was, for another thirty years, a thorn in the side of the royal power at Stockholm.*

MOTS CLES Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, Charles XIV Jean, Alexandre Ier, Nicolas Ier, Napoléon Ier, Israel Hwasser, Suède, Finlande, Russie, guerre russo-suédoise de 1808-1809, conquête de la Norvège en 1814, affaire du port de Slite, libéraux suédois XIX[e].

KEYWORDS *Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, Charles XIV Jean, Tsar Alexander I, Tsar Nicolas I, Napoleon, Israel Hwasser, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Russian-Swedish War of 1808-1809, Norwegian conquest, the port of Slite, nineteenth-century Swedish liberals.*

Introduction

The loss of Finland in 1809 was considered by a number of Swedes to be a catastrophe.[1] Many of them hoped for its return to the kingdom in one way or another, some because they were nostalgic for former grandeur, others because they wanted to snatch their former compatriots from the claws of a reactionary regime. In the 1830s, a book by Professor Hwasser that encouraged the Finns to remain under the protective wing of the Russians gave rise to an enormous wave of protests in Stockholm.[2]

The crown prince, then king, of Sweden, Charles XIV Jean, chose an option, however, which was counter to that wanted by a majority of his new fellow citizens. In the name of peace and prosperity of the kingdom, he created good relations with his powerful neighbour who supported his budding dynasty and his ambitions in Norway. Yet, the stance that he took did not earn him general ignominy. Certainly, there was some grumbling, but not indomitable opposition nor a systematic smear campaign, outside a few rather closed circles.[3]

This relative paradox has of course been a source of questions for historians, as well as the future sovereign's bias in favour of expansion towards the West.

First, for what reasons did Charles Jean choose a line of foreign policy that might earn him numerous enemies domestically? The explanations offered up until now have not been entirely satisfying, above all when they excessively personalise relations between the sovereigns[4] or primarily emphasize the Norwegian question. [5]

Moreover, how was Bernadotte able to maintain a more or less constant position while, at the same time, international circumstances were rapidly changing, especially at the beginning of his reign as prince? If we put aside the hypotheses of his stubbornness or that of his exceptional vantage point, each as difficult to believe as the other, then we must look for more detailed explanations: Russian pressure,[6] dynastic interests,[7] or the practical impossibility of throwing the country into a war of reconquest.[8] Unfortunately, the primary sources do not always offer easy answers to our questions, which means we have resort to deductive and inductive reasoning.

Furthermore, by what means was the Swedish sovereign able to discourage opposition to his Eastern designs? Evidently, cleverness

alone did not suffice. The circumstances also had to serve his interests, and a part of the population had to be favourable to his view of things. Yet, this was not yet the era of public opinion polls, which complicates the task of the researcher.

Finally, what advantages and disadvantages did Swedish diplomacy derive from this moderation of its position towards Russia? Most historians consider that, by favouring peace, this option enabled the economic development of the kingdom and the re-establishment of a balanced budget.[9] This is probably not wrong, but only in relative terms, because the good health of Scandinavian economies depended on external factors which their governments did not entirely have a hold over, for example the orientation of British foreign trade.[10]

This article thus humbly proposes to recall certain terms of a complex debate and to offer some avenues for reflection, from which we hope to sketch out some preliminary responses to the questions posed above. In so doing, the reader will probably see a more calculating and clever Bernadotte than the traditional works on him usually show.

The Loss of Finland: a Tragedy for the Swedes

In February 1808, Gustav IV harvested the bitter fruits of a foreign policy of provocation that, in any case, he was not able to see through to the end, as so many economic difficulties piled up, which were linked to the Continental Blockade and to the domestic political crisis.[11] The conflict with Russia, who was now allied with Napoleon, rapidly turned into a disaster, with, as a consequence, the fall of the sovereign and the loss of Finland, which had been an integral part of the country for the last 600 years. Contemporaries perceived the event as a great national tragedy.

It is true that military operations were particularly traumatic for Swedish patriots.[12] The 21st of February 1808, the Russian general F. W. von Buxhoevden launched military operations of conquest with an army of 24,000 soldiers and without any warning. Opposing them, there were, in theory, 20,000 combatants energized by a rather high level of morale. However, the commanders were quite mediocre and they only had 700 cavalry and 46 field guns at their disposal, which was nothing to speak of. Discipline, moreover, was insufficient. What was most worrisome, however, was the fact that the defence plan chosen by

Chief General Klinspor was not up to the task. In no way was he able to halt the progression of the enemy towards Helsinki and he placed too much trust in the capacity of maritime fortresses to hold out until the arrival of reinforcements. The Russians also had an officer of Finnish origin among their ranks, Georg Magnus Sprengtporten, whose advice would prove to be invaluable for getting around obstacles.

The 2nd of March, Buxhoevden's vanguard had already arrived in Helsinki and the maritime fortress of Svartholm, towards Lovisaa, had already fallen into the hands of its assailants after making a show of resistance. Although most of his troops were supposed to be concentrated around Hämeenlinna, Klinspor decided to move back further north towards Ostrobothnia because he had learned that the armed groups of Savo were already beating a retreat towards Kuopio. The first important battle took place, nevertheless, against Bagration at Tampere, but since it turned to the disadvantage of the Swedo-Finnish troops, the battle only hastened the retreat towards Oulu in very difficult conditions. At the beginning of April, Klinspor was forced to seek protection behind the Pyhäjoki. The Russians thought that they had already won, which Caulaincourt confirmed in a letter to Napoleon dated the 5th of April. Moreover, one month later, much to general consternation, the commander of Sveaborg, a fortress protecting the Gulf of Helsinki and reputed to be impenetrable, pathetically gave himself up to the enemy. However, the well-known determination of the Finns in battle had not been taken into account. A bit after mid-April, they had some successes on land which enabled them, among other things, to retake Kuopio on the 12th of May. This saved the Swedish army from falling apart, for the time being. New victories were even celebrated during the summer, such as the one at Lapua (14th July) and Alavus (10th August). Yet, Klinspor did not know how to take advantage of these victories. In addition, the conflict started by the Danes in the south of the kingdom, as well as the withdrawal of English troops and subsidies, prevented reinforcements from arriving. Thus, there was a new phase of retreat from the end of August to the beginning of September that ended in a temporary armistice signed at Olkijoki the 19th of November 1808 –and which left the troops in a state of great moral and psychological distress. One gallant last stand was attempted in the spring of 1809. This sudden burst of pride, however, was destined to fail. The Russians had consol-

idated their positions and won over the neutrality of the native elites through a clever policy of remuneration.[13] Nevertheless, military operations continued until July 1809 in the far north of the country, and then beyond what was then the frontier. The Swedish army was no longer in a position to respond effectively, because it was both exhausted and decimated. A definitive peace treaty was signed in September 1809 at Hamina, which definitively cut off from Sweden what the Diet of Porvoo had already named the Great Duchy of Finland, whose sovereign was none other than the Tsar of all Russians, Alexander I.

In Sweden proper, reactions were harsh from the beginning. Klinspor's hasty retreat immediately raised bitter discontent because the population considered it to be a sort of barely disguised flight. As he was close to Gustav IV, the sovereign was considered as the main person responsible for the disaster. With each defeat or surrender, his reputation deteriorated. The attitude of submission by the Finnish civil authorities was also very poorly accepted on the opposite shore of the Gulf of Bothnia. When Alexander I made his famous declaration of 17 June 1808 to the Finns, it was considered as the expression of a secret agreement. In November 1808, a delegation of important Finnish leaders, led by Baron Mannerheim, was also very badly received by the inhabitants of Stockholm, who suspected them of wanting to 'sell' Russian policy to an increasingly unpopular royal government. In December, the nomination of the 'traitor' Sprengporten to high office aroused a great sentiment of disgust. Conversely, any sign of resistance and any temporary success was noisily celebrated, as many hoped to see in these signs the beginning of a turn in the right direction.

The new defeats of the spring of 1809 were, however, the straw that broke the camel's back. A group of conspirators overthrew Gustav IV on 13 March 1809. Yet, as we know, even this *coup d'état* with its patriotic overtones could not reverse the course of events, despite the conspirators' determination to punish any acts of weakness. Certainly, the functioning of the Diet of Porvoo from 27 March 1809 allowed people to hold onto the idea of revenge just a bit longer, but little by little, one had to bow before the evidence: it was urgently necessary to sign a treaty, which was done with a heavy heart at the beginning of the summer. A few months after the signature of the peace treaty at Hamina, General Adlercreutz, one of the most respected figures of the

new group in power, took to the defence of his Finnish ex-compatriots before the Diet of Stockholm, the 20th December 1809, by highlighting the determining role of Finnish soldiers in the fierce resistance of the previous spring.[14] That said, many patriots still held onto the belief of a future re-conquest, and the choice of Bernadotte as Crown Prince in 1810 had much to do with this desire for revenge which the main conspirators personified.

In reality, this dream was a flight of fancy for a number of reasons. The first was that the alliance between Napoleon and Alexander I was still in force, and had been since the meeting of Tilsit. We might consider that alliance to be fragile, but it was nonetheless a reality until 1811. Yet, the more the project of reconquest was delayed, the more Russia was able to consolidate its military and political presence in Finland.[15] The financial situation was also dramatic. Shortages linked to the blockade and the war had made prices rise to dangerously high levels. Smuggling raged on, to the detriment of the poorest people. The State, heavily indebted, did not dare to raise taxes too high after the fall of Gustav IV and thus continued to print paper money –money that also weakened the public's confidence in the State's capacity to resolve the crisis.[16] In these conditions, any programme of armament, even the slightest bit ambitious, would have been difficult to put into place. After all, the army was in a critical state after the defeats of 1808-1809; in addition to new equipment, thorough reforms were needed in the domain of recruiting, which would not be inexpensive. We also need to remember that, although a warmongering opinion existed, a part of the Swedish population was weary of the politics of grandeur that had ruined the country and had increased the misery of ordinary people. In addition, the former "*Bonnets*" had maintained some support among a large part of the bourgeoisie and the land-holding peasantry.[17] It would thus have been difficult to obtain a consensus for a new war expedition. Finally, as for the Finns, they were no longer inclined to become the designated victims of new conflicts. Their social elites had, moreover, appreciated the rather flexible attitude of Alexander I. The country was proud to have been recognized as a separate entity within the Empire, and they simply wanted peace. Any sort of "rescue" expedition would have appeared dangerous rather than useful. [18]

It was in this context that the new Crown Prince of Sweden had

to make his initial choices. To ignore this fact would be to commit a considerable error of analysis and to underestimate the qualities of the solider and statesman that was Bernadotte.

The Initial Choices of Crown Prince Charles Jean, and Why they are Difficult to Uncover

Our purpose here is to understand why Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, definitively chosen as Crown Prince at the beginning of the autumn 1810, was ended up abandoning the idea of revenge on Russia and, above all, how he was able to impress his will on his subjects. In truth, the process of his decision-making was probably more complex that has often been described. In any case, it was never the result of a preconceived idea: that of the establishment of "natural frontiers" by the conquest of Norway.

In fact, this latter interpretation has been based on a certain amount of evidence which demands a degree of caution. For example, the former head of the Danish Army recounted in his memoires that, in 1814, during a meeting in Brussels, General Adlercreutz had, in strictest confidence, affirmed with bitterness that Bernadotte had been contacted in the spring of 1810, in the hope that he would be able to lead a reconquest of Finland, but that he had very quickly shifted his sights for Norway.[19] This is not an implausible story, although we might be surprised that such a degree of confidentiality could have existed between those who had been enemies a short time before… Metternich, for his part, wrote in his memoires that soon after Napoleon had officially accepted the election of one of his Maréchals to the throne of Sweden (23 September 1810), Bernadotte, supposedly, during the course of an evening had unequivocally declared, "I understand the thorns of this crown which has been offered to me; it was only a small group which has chosen me, not because they like the looks of me, but as a general and with the ulterior motive that I would help conquer Finland. Yet, to undertake a war with that end in mind would be a folly to which I will not lend a hand."[20] It is always necessary, however, to be wary of apologetic texts written years after the event they describe and in which the authors seek to prove their own historical importance. These words were obviously reformulated by someone who knew how the story would turn out. That said, on 5 February 1811, that is, shortly after tak-

ing up his Swedish post, when the French ambassador, Alquier, suggested an invasion of Finland in the Emperor's name, Bernadotte retorted rather sharply that he would prefer French assistance to seize Norway.[21] It is thus possible to establish a continuity of thought between these two dates.

However, putting the facts together in this way is a bit deceptive. Indeed, in a letter to his wife, Désirée Clarisse, dated 28 March 1811, and in which he would have had no interest in concealing the truth, Bernadotte implied that he had thought seriously about Napoleon's offer to attack Finland. He noted simply "the difficulty of carrying out a landing" because of the superiority of English vessels in the Baltic and "the lack of funds." For him, 20 million francs would have been needed in order to succeed and he justly reproached the Emperor of the French for not granting him that sum. Unless we imagine some sort of ruse on the part of the ex-Maréchal that sought out imperial criticism, we can logically conclude that Charles Jean had been keeping two irons in the fire. This means that Bernadotte, as interested as he may have been by the idea of annexing Norway, did not, in the beginning, make this an obsession. The argument that he was immediately won over by the report of Count Balthazar Bogislav von Platen on the Norwegian question (a document connected to the letter which announced his election at Örebro 21 August 1810),[22] appears more as a *post facto* reconstruction than as definitive proof.

In fact, knowing Bernadotte's acute sense of power relationships, we cannot brush aside the hypothesis that he had first sought to satisfy the majority of the people who had elected him. Very quickly, however, he would have evaluated the risks of a military expedition to Finland, both financial, political, and international (that is, Sweden openly becoming a pawn of the French Empire), and would have opted for a military accomplishment more within his reach. The fact that he had to replace Charles XIII at a moment's notice while the latter was momentarily ill would have also provided him with the occasion to strengthen the relationships he had formed with the Russians. In fact, Alexander I had already sent his emissary Czernitcheff to meet the candidate to the throne of Sweden in Paris.[23] Once Bernadotte was definitively seated on the throne in the Swedish capital, he met him once again in mid-December 1810. Czernitcheff brought him positive news: the Tsar still

wanted to push his advantage and, close to Christmas, had a letter sent offering his "friendship" to the Crown Prince.[24] Consequently, the Russian historian Vadim Roginski thinks that the Russians must have played a major role in the Crown Prince of Sweden's choice to compensate in the West what the kingdom had lost in the East. [25]

The problem with this attractive hypothesis is that Charles Jean at first seems to have been unsure about how to respond. One can easily understand why: he knew that a majority of the Swedes were attached to the former eastern provinces, and he knew about the desire of Napoleon to attack Russia soon, but on the other hand, he could see that the Emperor had no regard whatsoever for Swedish interests. Thus, he mulled over his response to Alexander I until mid-January. While the letter was written in a warm tone, the time he took to reflect on his answer shows that the author had calculated its effects. In particular, he underlined the fact that he wished to remain "independent," without specifying towards whom, in such a way as to maintain the ambiguity. During this period, the door remained open to any and all possibilities.[26]

It was Napoleon's repeated refusal to commit himself financially, the cavalier manner with which he treated his former assistant, and his indifference to Swedish interests that definitively tipped the scales in favour of Russia.[27] The visible animosity with the ambassador Alquier did not help the situation either.[28] Nevertheless, more practical factors pushed Bernadotte towards an alliance with Russia. He and his advisors could not help noticing the gradual corrosion of relations between Denmark and Norway over the last twenty years. They were also aware of the relative weakness of the Danish army, who had shown themselves to be incapable in 1808-1809 of beating the few Swedish contingents who had come to engage them. Between an uncertain landing on the western coast of Finland and an invasion of a clearly inferior rival that could very well be victorious, he hardly needed to hesitate. Moreover, a rapid victory of Napoleon over Russia would mean that the Baltic powers would be even more subject to the French blockade and thus the ruin of their ports.

In January 1812, the invasion of Swedish Pomerania –that small but rich German province of the kingdom– by General Friant's troops marked the breaking point. The majority of Swedes judged this show of force to be inacceptable, which added to the general unpopularity of the

continental blockade. In order to re-gain Stralsund and its region, the Russian alliance was obviously decisive. However, in March 1812, Charles Jean held real power in his hands for a few months with the slight illness of Charles XIII. He could thus prepare his entourage and public opinion for a *rapprochement* with Saint-Petersburg. At this particular moment, in June, the Great Army surged onto the Russian plain, brushing past the meagre defences of Barclay de Tolly at first. With his political skill, Bernadotte understood that the Tsar would be obliged to make concessions in the case of a negotiation. Moreover, he also realized that, not only had Napoleon's troops *not* taken the route to St. Petersburg, but they also seemed to be having difficulty on the road to Moscow.[29] Indeed, as a result of the scorching heat of the summer, the route had become a deadly trap for the hundreds of thousands of men lacking water for themselves and fodder for their horses. When the first great battle took place in August near Smolensk, the Emperor had already lost a third of his men.[30] In addition, when the diplomats of the "perfidious Albion" (Britain) became aware of the need to intervene for a Russian-Swedish alliance, Charles Jean jumped at the opportunity. It was thus not out of 'friendship' for Alexander I, nor out of simple hatred for Napoleon, and less still from "Norway-mania," that the Swedish Crown Prince entered onto the path towards a *rapprochement* with the Tsar, but because he was led by a sense of the reality of the situation and by the hope of being able to make the best of a dangerous situation, in a conflict among titans in which he could not play a major role.

At the same time, however, the meeting of Abo (Turku) between Alexander and Charles Jean, each surrounded by their principal advisors, brought lucrative advantages to Swedish diplomacy as well as to Bernadotte's future dynasty.[31] Even though the discussions were fierce from 25th -30th August, they enabled the Crown Prince to lay the foundations for the recomposition of his power and the stabilisation of that power in the long term. Three clauses seem to have been essential:

- The Swedish treasury received 1.5 million rubles that were needed to refurbish the Army.
- The Russians accepted the transfer of Norway, in case of war against Denmark, and committed to furnishing 35,000 men in order to help win the war if necessary, which was the confirmation of an agreement that had already been discreetly signed at the beginning of April.

- The Romanovs supported the Bernadottes against the renewed claims by the Holstein-Gottorp family to the Swedish throne. At the same time, the future of the young Oscar became clear thanks to a weighty ally, at least if the Russian armies carried the day, which was still uncertain.

The only thing Alexander received in return was the sending of Swedish troops to defend St. Petersburg in case of attack, a scenario that was still unlikely at this precise moment in the Russian campaign. Bernadotte thus got the better of the deal by winning something concrete against something hypothetical.

On the other hand, once the retreat from Moscow had started and the remnants of the Great Army disintegrated bit by bit, the Crown Prince of Sweden began to fear a reversal on the part of the Russian authorities, or at least a failure to keep their promises. He had not yet completely realized the state of exhaustion of Koutousov's troops, which prevented them from fully taking advantage of their situation and which compelled Alexander I to prudence. During the autumn of 1812 and the beginning of 1813, Charles Jean and Charles XIII nevertheless had to make a great deal of effort to prevent Sweden from being treated as an insignificant power, in particular in resolving the German question. Bernadotte also had the bitter disappointment of seeing Napoleon try to discredit him in the eyes of Charles XIII.[32] The gains of Turku thus remained fragile for the time being, and Charles Jean was not at all sure of his future.

This was the main reason behind his famous letter to Alexander I on 11 June 1813, sent from Stralsund, which was once again occupied by his troops. At this moment of the war, the Allies had signed an armistice with Napoleon. However, this could, according to his own words, "throw a sepulchral veil over Europe," that is to say, to lead to a peace favourable to the Emperor. Diving in once again, Bernadotte suggested a face-to-face meeting with the Tsar, so that "no divergence of opinion" remained between them (proof that such differences did very well exist). As the Sixth Coalition was being put into place and everyone's help was needed, Alexander I could not refuse such an offer, even more so coming from a former Maréchal of the Empire. On 15 July 1813, the two men met at the castle of Trachenberg, near Breslau (Wroclaw), at a high-level conference among the allies. Bernadotte

managed to have himself entrusted with the command of the future Northern Army that enabled him, when the moment had come, to swoop down on the rear guard of the Danish army, which was still stuck in the French alliance. [33]

The 'crossing of the Rubicon' took place two weeks after the battle of Leipzig when, in the beginning of November 1813, the Swedish corps of the Northern Army conspicuously headed for Hanover, then the south towards the Danish kingdom. On 15 January 1814, after brief combat, he was able to wrench the Treaty of Kiel from the king of Denmark, which granted Sweden the Norwegian part of his kingdom. None of the Allies dared to protest, because the French campaign was about to start, a difficult moment when it was necessary to pull together. [34] The Norwegians still presented a certain resistance by proclaiming themselves independent for a few months. However, the end result was no longer in doubt. [35] Above all, in the eyes of Europe, the Finnish page seemed to have been turned. All that remained, however, was to convince the Swedes, which was not the easiest thing to do.

"*Dividere est imperare*", or, the Manoeuvres of Charles Jean to Make the Swedish Definitively Admit the Loss of Finland

While in the beginning of May 1813, the Crown Prince was en route for Stralsund at the head of an army whose situation looked dangerous, a diverse opposition crystallized in the country. A newspaper from the capital did not hesitate to openly call into question his policy of abandoning Finland. In reality, this was a recurrent theme, despite the diplomatic successes of the summer 1812. At the slightest sign of weakness, this subject risked re-appearing in force and diminishing accordingly all the chances for success of the Norwegian operation which, from now on, occupied all Bernadotte's thoughts.

Those most inclined to want to reconquer the Great Duchy were originally the military and the nobles, like Adlercreutz, who was named Army Chief of Staff during Bernadotte's trip to Paris in 1814. Many of these men were not, properly speaking, opponents, but some of them situated themselves within the intellectual movement of the '*chapeaux*' of the 18th century, while others were more or less camouflaged partisans of the Gustavian dynasty. The projects for the incorporation of Norway seemed hazy to them and without any great economic interest.

They also put the honour of the country and the army in the foreground. Adlercreutz's resignation in January 1815 was, in part, dictated by reasons of age and health. The resignation of such a loyal man reveals, nevertheless, his great disappointment about the new directions that Bernadotte was taking.[36] One part of the officer corps, in particular the older men, were also shocked to see veterans of the Finnish war more or less neglected, like the colonel Johan Fredrik Eek, who was saved *in extremis* from debtor's prison by the generosity of his friends who ended up substituting for the state to compensate the loss of his Finnish possessions.[37] Next to this group of malcontents, generally situated on the right side of the political chessboard, there was also, on the left, a small group of liberals who were concerned about the promises made to the Russian autocracy.

A rebellion by the supporters of reconquest was still possible, and to combat this, Charles XIV Jean showed himself to be less conservative at the beginning of his own reign (after 1818) than has often been described. With a fair amount of boldness, he tried to reassure the liberals by criticizing the autocracy behind its back as well as its effects on Russian foreign policy. In February 1823, for example, before the secret committee of the Diet, he directed the attention of the audience to the Tsarist regime's propensity to put pressure on Sweden. He thundered against the Russian presence "at the gates of Stockholm" (allusion to the situation in the islands of Aaland) and considered that the struggle against absolutism and constitutional regimes would probably be the great conflict of the century.[38] This was, in his mind, a way to indirectly praise the Swedish constitutional system, which was considered to be on the correct side of the line, of course, all the while indicating that his policy of appeasement towards Russia did not imply that he was renouncing the vital interests of the Nation. The allusion to the Aaland Islands was a means to underscore his firmness towards an ally who was sometimes considered to be burdensome. It should be noted, in passing, that Charles XIV Jean did not at all situate himself in the political line of Metternich, who had committed himself since 1819 to a merciless ideological struggle against liberalism and to putting all of Germany under police surveillance.

In the spring of 1825, the sale of decommissioned warships to the new republics of South America was also a sign addressed to the liberal

opposition –to the great displeasure of Alexander I, who was advancing in age and much less open-minded than at the beginning of his reign. Moreover, the Tsar took this little 'rebellion' very badly and demanded, with Frederic-William of Prussia, (the reactionary sovereign *par excellence)*, the restitution of the said vessels. In the end, since the United Kingdom refused to give its support, the sale was annulled in part. However, Charles Jean did his best to make his ministers appear responsible for Sweden's backing-down.[39] It is clear that he did not want to call into question the fundamental position he had chosen in 1812, because it guaranteed the duration of his dynasty and enabled him to refocus the country's efforts on economic development. In addition, he did not want to appear to be a fearful sovereign.

At the very beginning of the 1830s, he once again brought up the militarisation of the Aaland Islands for discussion and sought the support of the United Kingdom in order to put pressure on Russia, so that it would abandon its project of fortifying Bomarsund. Nicolas I wanted to hear nothing of it and, on the contrary, became threatening.[40]

Discretion, however, is the better part of valour. It would not have been a good idea to push his contestation too far, under the pretext of making himself popular. It would have been dangerous to cut himself off from the most loyal ally of the throne, the conservatives. It was, therefore, urgent to reassure them, by creating a line of foreign policy that sought to establish stability within the country and peace beyond its borders. The declaration of neutrality, despite its innovative nature, was the instrument used for this project. Published 4 January 1834, it inaugurated a new and lasting era of Swedish diplomacy. Indeed, the double kingdom officially renounced its military policy in such a way that incensed the short-tempered Nicolas I. Bernadotte re-focused his actions on economic development and strengthening the union with Norway, which pleased large entrepreneurs on one hand, and on the other hand, the partisans for royal authority.

The most committed liberals, conversely, saw this policy as a renunciation of the criticisms of the autocracy, a sort of guilty abstention of Sweden at the very moment when Europe was beginning to liberate itself from the Holy Alliance. They distanced themselves from Charles Jean and his government, and multiplied their attacks in the press against "immobilism". The conservatives, on the contrary, decid-

ed to support the sovereign. As a result, the vast majority of them ratified his Norwegian policy, even pushing the king to be more firm regarding the question of autonomy granted in 1814.[41] This meant, among other things, that the former Gustavians or those who were nostalgic for the "*chapeaux*" no longer made the Finnish question a priority. On this occasion, Bernadotte scored new points in showing his skill at strategy.

Even so, relations with Russia did not become idyllic –too many interests were at stake. In the north of the kingdom, for example, tensions remained high between Swedish fisherman and Russian companies. Even though they were private individuals, the Swedish state could not remain indifferent to their problem. The Tsarist authorities, from their side, encouraged their nationals to act like conquerors. Charles Jean, moreover, was also very active in the creation of the Slite Company.[42] The goal was to attract a part of British and Western European maritime traffic towards the island of Gotland. Nicolas I, however, was firmly decided not to let loose the reins he held over his Scandinavian neighbour. He organised a surprise visit to Stockholm in June 1838, during which he discreetly put pressure on the Swedish sovereign to conduct diplomacy in a way that was more accommodating to Russian interests. One did not have to wait long for the result, rather humiliating in essence: Charles Jean abandoned the Slite Company to its own fate and strove, during all the last years of his reign, to avoid doing anything which might displease the Tsar of all Russians. In so doing, he implicitly confirmed Sweden's renunciation of bringing Finland back to the fold. He also turned his back on the liberal opposition, who took the opportunity to associate his attitude toward the Russians with the political and constitutional conservatism at work within Sweden. To make things worse, the order of peasants at the Diet, usually favourable to the monarchy, on many occasions expressed their disappointment at seeing Finland remain in the hands of their hereditary enemy. The old wound was no longer open, but bitter feelings could occasionally be brought back to life. [43]

Another episode, also dating from 1838, underscores this reality. A former professor from the University of Turku who had come to live in Sweden, Israel Hwasser, had just published a work entitled, *Om allianstraktaten emellan Sverige och Ryssland ar 1812. Politisk betraktelse öfver*

Nordens nuvarande ställning [*On the Treaty of Alliance of 1812 between Sweden and Russia. Some Political Reflections on the Current Situation in the North],* in which he praised the foreign policy conducted by Charles Jean. For him, the decision to conquer Norway rather than to try to recover Finland had been a wise choice, because Sweden was thus freed from the heavy burden of national defence. In addition, the separation from their former mother country had revealed itself to be beneficial for the Finns, as they were heretofore endowed with their own institutions and new means to define their economic and spiritual future.[44] Hwasser, whose affection towards the Finns cannot be doubted, thus tried to come to the aide of sovereign who was rather ill-treated by public opinion during the end of his reign.

The book raised a wave of indignation among the opposition. The liberal newspaper *Dagligt Allehanda* (*An Assortment of the Daily News*) said forcefully that Finland, in reality, had become a sort of Russian province without any true liberty. The paper also contested the idea according to which the Finns, in 1812, had no longer wanted to become a part of Sweden again. Moreover, it presented the Diet of Porvoo as a simple publicity stunt orchestrated by Alexander I. Their point of view had no subtlety, but it reflected well the state of mind of a number of Swedes. Another liberal newspaper, *Aftonbladet* (*The Evening News*) presented Israel Hwasser traitorously as a "Russian former professor" who had put himself in the service of the Tsars and exaggerated the level of Finland's autonomy. [45]

On the other side of the Gulf of Bothnia, the reception of the book was very reserved as well, at least in certain circles of national romanticists. Professor Adolf Ivar Arwidsson, who had formerly been in conflict with Hwasser at Turku, published a detailed response in the form of a small booklet titled *Finland and its Future*, which he nevertheless signed under a pseudonym in order to avoid difficulties with the local authorities and those from St. Petersburg. In it, he asserted once again that in 1809 the majority of Finns thought like the Swedes and that the Diet of Porvoo had merely been "a political parade". He recognized, however, the economic progress that had been accomplished since then and he pointed out that the country had found the conditions for a lasting peace beyond its borders. However, he frankly denounced the censorship in place and called his fellow citizens to continue their efforts to

strengthen their national identity. In conclusion, he thought that his colleague Hwasser had only seen the positive side of things and had embellished the situation. [46]

The Finnish policy of Charles XIV Jean, which he never explained, did not please everyone. In fact, while the initial reasoning of the Swedish sovereign seems logical, it went against the liberal or national-romantic sensibilities of the time, which was a significant handicap for later generations who mostly heard the voices of his opponents. Moreover, Norway would, in the future, constitute a thorn in the side of the kingdom. The positive results for Sweden from its position of neutrality were thus not really understood or appreciated several generations later.

Conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn from the preceding discussion? We see first that, concerning Finland, Bernadotte's position was probably more opportunistic than his biographers have previously thought. His knowledge of military aspects and his economic realism certainly made him quickly see that a reconquest presented more risks than advantages, but he did, nevertheless, consider this option. Afterwards, circumstances compelled him to ally himself with the Tsar in order to recover Pomerania and put an end to the Danish threat.

Overall, Swedish elites by both rank and wealth ended up accepting the Norwegian compensation, not out of enthusiasm but out of political interest, because the system as a whole conceived of by Charles Jean represented an effective defence against the most audacious liberal demands. Yet, there is no doubt that the majority of the population considered the loss of the Eastern provinces to be a tragedy and the acquisition of Norway as mediocre compensation. To resist the pressure, this sovereign of French origins thus had to resolve himself to manoeuvre between different groups and political sensibilities to try to make them see, despite everything, the soundness of his reasoning.

At the same time, maintaining relations that were, if not cordial, at least polite with Tsarist Russia was vital for establishing his dynasty because only the support of the Tsar guaranteed that he would be recognized outside Sweden as a true sovereign despite his revolutionary origins. It was thus out of the question for him to renounce this relationship.

As for the fruits of his Finland policy for the Swedish population, they were not all bitter. A new war would have led to others and would have placed the Public Treasury in a situation that would have been impossible to manage, since the paper money supply had doubled between 1808-1812 without the gold and silver reserves experiencing a similar increase.[47] The disorganisation of commerce following the continental blockade had, moreover, been deadly to the traditional exports of iron and lumber –to such an extent that the trade deficit in 1813 was 12 million *riksdaler*, an enormous figure relative to the size of the country. The United Kingdom later decided to buy its wood from Canada for the following twenty years. The consequences were dramatic in Scandinavia, particularly in Norway. We have to wait until the 1830s to see a noticeable rise in trade. Metallurgy also suffered an analogous decline.[48] It was thus imperative not to embark upon an uncertain military adventure. Above all, it was necessary to concentrate the country's efforts on economic development and modernisation, two elements which presuppose a lasting peace.[49] In the end, ironmasters, ship-owners, shopkeepers, and landowners were grateful to Bernadotte for having considered their interests. Likewise, many of those nostalgic for military grandeur were able to console themselves by obtaining positions within the government, which was in full expansion. Dreams of grandeur had not disappeared, but they were dulled by the need to break out of the doldrums and to adapt oneself to new times.

On the other hand, in the political domain, the personalisation of power only strengthened the authoritarianism of a sovereign who had learned so well under Napoleon. As a result, institutions developed less rapidly than did the economy or the society. This would later lead to new tensions, which were perceptible at the end of his reign and which generated protests in all areas, in particular foreign policy.

Notes

1 Ingvar Andersson, *Histoire de la Suède des origines à nos jours*, Roanne, Horvath, 1973, pp. 252-253 ; Jean-Pierre Mousson-Lestang, *Histoire de la Suède*, Paris, Hatier, 1995, pp. 141-142.
2 Olavi Junnila, *Ruotsiin muuttanut Adolf Iwar Arwidsson ja Suomi 1823-1858* [*A Refugee in Sweden, A.I. Arwidsson and Finland 1823-1858*], Helsinki, S.H.S., 1972, chap. IV.
3 Torvald T. Höjer, *Bernadotte maréchal de France et roi de Suède*, Paris, Plon, 1971.
4 Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *Bernadotte chef de guerre et chef d'État*, Paris, Perrin, 1968, pp. 361-379.
5 Christian Bazin, *Bernadotte, un cadet de Gascogne sur le trône de Suède*, Paris, France-Empire, 2000, pp.138-149 ; Jörgen Weibullin, *Carl Johan och Norge 1810-1814. Unionsplanerna och deras*

förverkligande [*Charles Jean and Norway 1810-1814. Projects for A Union and their Diffculties]*, dissertation, 1957.

6. Vadim Roginski, "Oliko Kaarle Juhana veneläisten " vaikuttaja-agentti"" [*Charles Jean. Was he an Agent of Russian Influence ?*], *in* Tapani Suominen (dir)., *Itsekyyttä vai valtiomiestaitoa : Ruotsin idänpolitiikka ja Suomi vuodesta 1812 vuoteen 2002* [*Egotism or Know-How of a Statesman : The Eastern Policies of Sweden and Finland, 1812-2002*], Helsinki, 2004, pp. 135-149. Vadim Roginski is also the author of a thesis in Russian on Swedish-Norwegian relations and the alliance of 1812.
7 Christian Bazin, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-238.
8 Vadim Roginski, thesis cited.
9. The biographers of Charles Jean, particularly Christian Bazin and Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, insist on this point.
10. Markku Kuisma, « Les facteurs de l'industrialisation en Finlande et dans les pays nordiques au XIX[e] siècle", *Revue d'histoire nordique/Nordic historical review* n°1, décembre 2005, pp. 54-71.
11. Jean-Pierre Mousson-Lestang, *op. cit.*, pp.152-154 ; some parts of this can also be found in the dissertation of Stem Carl Oscar Carlsson, *Gustav IV Adolphs fall. Krisen i riksslyreisen, konspirationerna och statsvälvningen 1807-1809* [*The Fall of Gustav IV Adolphe. National Crisis, Conspiracy, and Coup d'État*], Lund, 1944 ; see also the introduction to the dissertation of Päiviö Tommila, *La Finlande dans la politique européenne 1809-1815*, Helsinki, S.K.S., 1962, 478 p.
12. The details which follow, about the above mentioned operations, are taken largely from Erkki Osmonsalo, *Suomen valloitus 1808* [*The Conquest of Finland in 1808*] Porvoo, Werner Söderström O.Y., 1947, 459 p. as well as Anders Persson, *1808 gerillakriget i Finland* [*The Guerilla War In Finland in 1808*], Stockholm, Ordfronts förlag, 1986, 271 p.
13. Aune Nummi, *Venäläinen propaganda ja rauhoitustoimeenpiteet Suomessa sodan alussa ja varsinaisen taiteluvaiheen aikana vuonna 1808* [*Russian Propaganda and Appeasement Measures in Finland at the Beginning of the War and During the Combat Phase of 1808*], Pro-gradu [Master's Thesis], University of Helsinki, 1951.
14. Stem Carl Oscar Carlsson, *op. cit.*
15. Pertti Luntinen, *The imperial Russian army and navy in Finland 1808-1918*, Helsinki, SHS, 1997, first chapter.
16. David Kirby, *The Baltic world 1772-1993, Europe's northern periphery in an age of change*, London and New-York, Longman, 1995, p. 37 ; Pierre Mousson-Lestang, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
17. Stem Carl Oscar Carlsson, *op. cit.*
18. Helge Pohjolan-Pirhonen, *Kansakunta löytää itsensä 1808*-1855 [*The Nation Finds Itself 1808-1855*], volume 3 of the series, *Kansakunnan historia* [*History of the Nation*], Porvoo-Helsinki, Werner Söderström O.Y., 1973, pp. 273-285.
19. Gabriel Rein, *Karl Johan Adlercreutz försök till levnadsteckning* [*Karl Johan Adlercreutz : Attempting his Biography]*, Helsinki, Svenska litteratursallskapet i Finland, 1927, p. 675.
20. "*Je connais les épines de cette couronne qui m'est offerte ; ce n'est qu'un petit parti qui m'a choisi non pour mes beaux yeux, mais comme général et avec l'arrière-pensée que j'aiderais à conquérir la Finlande. Mais entreprendre une guerre à cette fin serait une folie à laquelle je ne prêterai pas la main*". Metternich, *Mémoires* ; cited in Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, p. 333.
21. *Ibidem*, p. 377 ; Christian Bazin, *op. cit.*, p. 137. The primary source for this is the report sent by Alquier to Napoleon on 7 February.
22. Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, p. 361
23. Vadim Roginski, *art. cit.*
24. Bernadotteska Familjearkivet (BFA), Karl XIV Johans arkiv Nr 53 ; Christian Bazin, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127 provides excerpts of this text, as does Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, pp. 369-370.
25. Vadim Roginski, *art. cit.*
26. *Ibidem*, pp. ; Bernadotteska Familjearkivet (BFA), Karl XIV Johans arkiv Nr 53.
27. Bernadotte's correspondance with Napoleon, published in 1819, gives good examples of the degradation of bilateral relations between Sweden and France.
28. The reports of Alquier's audiences which he sent to Paris, as well as the complaints

Bernadotte made about the ambassador, fournish clues which have been analysed successively by Höjer, Girod de l'Ain and Bazin, *op. cit.* One of the most well-known episodes is the angry memorandum that he sent to Charles Jean on 20 July 1811 (Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, pp. 385-386).

29. The 11 August 1812, Charles Jean sent a letter— full of premonition— to Alexander I on the likely exhaustion of French troops ; Bernadotteska Familjearkivet (BFA), Karl XIV Johans arkiv ; excerpts cited by Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, pp. 411-412.
30. Clausewitz, *La campagne de Russie de 1812*, Bruxelles, Complexe, 1987, p. 49.
31. For a precise presentation, see Torvald T. Höjer, *op. cit.*, the chapter consacrated to the meeting at Turku ; see also Helge Pohjolan-Pirhonen, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-285.
32. Christian Bazin, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-156.
33. This episode is recounted in a summary manner by Christian Bazin, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-168, and more completely by Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, pp. 440-448 and above all by Torvald T. Höjer, *op. cit.*, with nearly 15 pages on the subject.
34. Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, chapitre VIII.
35. Bertrand de Lafarge, "À propos d'une statue équestre du maréchal Bernadotte, roi de Suède-Norvège : une intrusion ambiguë dans l'histoire norvégienne", in Michel Bertrand, Patrick Cabanel, Bertrand de Lafarge, *La fabrique des nations. Figures de l'État-nation dans l'Europe du XIX^e siècle*, Paris, Éditions de Paris, Max Chaleil, 2003, pp. 75-96.
36. Gabriel Rein, *op. cit.*, second to last chapter.
37. Helge Pohjolan-Pirhonen, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
38. Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, p. 587.
39. *Ibidem*, p. 596.
40. Helge Pohjolan-Pirhonen, *op. cit.*, pp. 462-464 ; David Kirby, *op. cit*, p. 114.
41. Torvald T. Höjer, *op. cit.*
42. There is an entire dossier concering this subject in the archives of Stockholm : Bernadotteska Familjearkivet (BFA), Karl XIV Johans arkiv ; some elements are analysed in David Kirby, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98 and in Gabriel Girod de l'Ain, *op. cit.*, pp. 618-619.
43. *Ibidem*,
44. Israel Hwasser, *Om allianstraktaten emellan Sverige och Ryssland ar 1812. Politisk betraktelse öfver Nordens nuvarande ställning*, Stockholm, 1838.
45. Helge Pohjolan-Pirhonen, *op. cit.*, p. 474.
46. Pekka Kuoharinen (alias Adolf Ivar Arwidsson), *Finland och dess Framtid*, 1838 ; Olavi Junnila, *op. cit.*, devotes several excellent pages to this politico-intellectual conflict ; see also Helge Pohjolan-Pirhonen, *op. cit.*, pp. 473-480.
47. Pierre Mousson-Lestang, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
48. Markku Kuisma, *art. cit.*, pp. 55-59.
49 .See the chapter in the present work by Jean-Marc Olivier, "La politique économique de Charles XIV Jean de Suède-Norvège (1810-1844) : entre pragmatisme et vision à long terme".